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AMERICAN WOODS FOR FURNITURE.

THE growing scarcity of black-walnut, which ranks next to mahogany in price, is not wholly a thing to lament, since it has brought the strong-grained light woods again into use. Carved oak in Jacobean chairs and cabinets may begin once more to gather color, slowly and richly as a meerschau clouds. Oak will stain like ebony; but let no art-lover of true taste countenance the practice of staining woods which are beautiful in their clear veining, alive from the axe. Oak aside, all knowledge of forest craft and joinery leagues to search out new woods for cabinet-work. The curied maple, valued in England, is next to the satinwood of the tropics in color and lustre; and the clear maple, boldly carved, may rank next to white holly, of which costly drawing-room suites are chiselled in Louis XVI. style, and these lead the fashion with Empire mahogany and ebonized furniture. The latter is past its first favor, and those dreadful visions with which expensive furnishers have saddened our eyes shall vex us no more: visions of black and gold tapestry carpets, and zebra-hued hangings of black and yellow damasked satin, or, as one leading upholsterer actually showed me last season, black and gold guipure lace for drawing-room curtains to match the ebony and gilt furniture, cushioned in black and gold brocade. It was a kind of imperial mourning, which suggested yellow fever and black death. Not to condemn ebonized furniture altogether—for nothing betrays limited judgment like sweeping prejudices against a thing excellent in its own rank, though not universally admirable—fashionable houses have had enough of it for a while, and a cabinet or pedestal will answer as reminder of the style. It may linger, too, in country houses of good keeping, where a bygone style sometimes pleasantly holds its graces till the fashion comes round again, and where slender ebony and gilt well relieves pale creamy French cretonnes and light Aubusson. Ebony always calls for light surroundings.

In place of the choice which has existed so long between walnut, ebony, and expensive rosewood, a wealth of woods is now offered—not only curled maple and ash, but curled elm, with figures and flakings like rose-engine or Persian patterns; hickory, which with its fine tough grain will carve and polish like ivory, and may justly class as a precious wood, lasting for generations; and cherry, that aromatic domestic mahogany which is worth much better attention than it receives, both in shaping and polish. And not only cherry comes in use, but its kin of fruit-trees, tough and close of fibre and rich in polish, though few imagine an old fruit-tree fit for anything but indifferent firewood. Let such learn thrift before they burn value. An English carver thinks himself in luck if he can get the stump of an old apple-tree to season for brackets and high carving, for it works well and is charming in tone. For table-tops, and odd chairs, and choice pieces, let the amateur joiner and carver go no farther afield than till he finds an old pippin or plum-tree ready for the axe. As for pear-wood, have we not been buying it stained long enough, and paying three prices for it as black-walnut? That is a stale trick of joinery. There, too, is beech from the Indiana levels which have been stripped of their walnut. Redwood, truest to the grain of any known wood, and California laurel, with a score of rich inlays from Pacific forests, are in millionaires' houses. While for paupers—of taste—what so cheering in its poverty as cottage wainscoting of red Canadian and yellow pine, with doors in clear wide panels of white Northern pine, its satiny surface tenderly lustrous, like a woman's flesh or a salmon's breathing sheen? Suites of cottage furniture, after English design, of pine finished in shellac meet the difficult requirement of something inexpensive but in complete good taste. Pine is not precisely cheap in an artistic view; for is it not in the house of Mr. Frederick Leighton, the English artist, that the inlaying of yellow Southern pine is so much admired for its effect like dead gold? How many visitors to the picturesque hotel at Long Beach last summer had eyes for the rich-

ness of the natural coloring of the pine wood in the great veranda, which, as seen just before completion, between the dead white sands of the shore and the intense blue overhead, seemed to glow and flush with ruddy, mellow color? Artistic teaching rapidly shows us how to value common materials which lie in abundance to our hands.

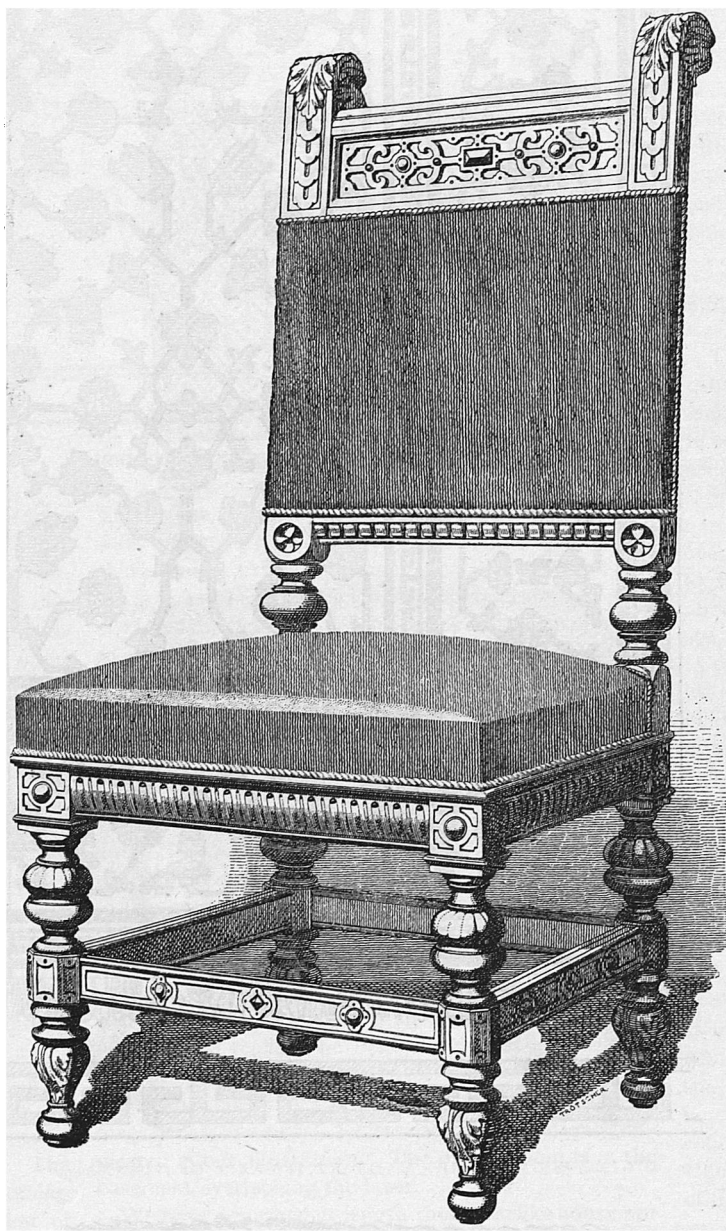
SHIRLEY DARE.

PRACTICAL ROOM DECORATION.

I.

A MODEL BACK PARLOR.

ONE finds in the books of the day devoted to "art" decoration and furniture wondrous descriptions, almost without end, of wondrous "mansions" which too often are useful only as frightful examples of what can be done by the combination of ostentatious magnificence and pretentious ignorance. To seek at such sources



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for any real practical suggestions that might be applied with success to the fitting up of the home of Brown, Smith, or Robinson, would be vain. It is therefore with a feeling of peculiar satisfaction that we turn again to the excellent "Outline Sketches for Furnishing" by H. J. Cooper, already noticed in our columns as appearing in our English contemporary, *The Artist*. These are at once sensible and practical, and will be found, with very slight modification, as valuable for American homes as for those of England.

Mr. Cooper begins his series with a fairylike transformation of that small dull back room, well known in London houses as the library, study, or morning-room; that looks across a back yard or vacant space on to a blank wall, or perhaps some outbuilding, which, together with neighboring houses, seriously diminishes the supply of light, probably at no time too plentiful. In our American cities, with our usual abundance of light, the back room, known as sitting-room or back parlor, which answers to this London apartment, is, as a rule, by no

means so cheerless. But there is doubtless familiar to our readers many a room looking northward which is as dreary and as much in need of enlivenment as Mr. Cooper's "study," and as he converts that dismal apartment into a pleasant place, and neutralizes the effect of the ugly surroundings, so may they do likewise.

The elements for an artistic treatment are: Four square walls, each measuring on plan twelve or fourteen feet at most, by some eleven feet six inches in height; a large flat window, on the top-and-bottom-sash principle; a four-panelled door; and a gray or black marble mantelpiece, with a cast-iron stove. The floor is of the usual common pine boards, and the ceiling has a cornice of insignificant plaster ornament, with a "ceiling-flower" three feet in diameter in the middle. The woodwork is probably grained to imitate oak, and the walls are covered with a light brown paper, of red diamond pattern, this being accepted as the correct pattern for a library; the ceiling is whitewashed.

Now, if the reader has grasped the situation, it will be obvious that for a room already but imperfectly lighted and shut out from all natural beauty, the lower tones and subdued combinations of color will not only be thrown away, but will positively increase the gloom and depression belonging to the room already by reason of its position. And yet a subdued background is required for the pictures; for it is presumed there are some to be hung.

The room, for its length and width, is already too high, and will easily bear some horizontal lines, which will have the effect of reducing it in height, also for a threefold division of wall-space, thus at once bringing in the element of variety without sacrificing the length and breadth of the room, which will, in fact, appear to be longer and broader than it really is. It would be easy to magnify the actual dimensions of this or of any room by the use of silvered glass; and in some cases it might not be objectionable to have recourse to it; but the expedient, at best flimsy and calling out no special powers of invention and application, has undoubted drawbacks, not only on account of its unreality and falsity, and the extent to which it is associated with large retail shops and restaurants, but from the necessity of giving up much wall-space, out of a limited area, that might be put to far better service. It is often humiliating to see well-bound volumes crowded together near the floor on a few mean shelves, while above, and perhaps in piers and adjacent recesses also, the wall is occupied by vacant, do-nothing mirrors in their uninteresting frames of gilt composition.

In a bachelor's room, however, plate glass is certainly less called for than in my lady's boudoir; and in the present instance it would seriously interfere with the projected scheme if introduced in too conspicuous a manner. Returning then to our starting-point, let us strike out first the broad band of wall whereon to hang small-sized pictures. There remain then the upper and lower spaces of wall; the lower measuring about 4 feet and the upper portion 5 feet.

A primary necessity of this apartment is light; and yet the walls, as far as the eye can easily rest upon them, are required of a sufficient depth of tone not to come into harsh contrast with dark oak, and accessories rather rich and sombre than light-colored. Above the picture-line, however, no such restrictions are binding upon us—beyond the admitted axiom in all decoration, that a definite relation of tone must be preserved throughout. The 5-feet space (or perhaps 4 feet 6 inches, for we must not divide our 11-feet room equally) shall therefore be covered with a paper of what may be technically termed a damask pattern. The pattern which Mr. Cooper has chosen is a conventionalized rose, closely interwoven, upon a finely powdered ground; and the coloring is a delicious green-gold, the result being achieved by the carefully calculated quantities of pale golden emerald green dotted work upon a ground of varied creamy tints with warmer touches of ochre. It is neither yellow nor green; but as a well-covered paper and one that will reflect light, nothing could answer our purpose better. So much for the upper wall, to which we can always turn with a sense of